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Atari Online News, Etc.
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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I know, I know - last week I told you all that it was cold here in the Northeast. Well, I was wrong! This week was cold; last weekend was warm in comparison! We're setting all kinds of records for cold temperatures this week. As I sit here putting together this week's issue, I looked over at my PC next to me and see my WeatherCast icon depicting 0 degrees - and it's going to drop even more overnight. I heard that when I leave for work in the morning tomorrow, it's supposed to be about ten below zero, without the wind chill factored in! What that weather report doesn't explicitly show is the wind speeds and wind-chill temperatures. I don't think I've seen this kind of weather since I was a kid growing up in Maine. And at that age, we didn't really care about the cold as long as we kept moving! And yes, the foolish dogs still want to go out to see what's going on outside - one more trip tonight and that's it for them for the day! This weekend, they predict "balmy" weather - between 15 and 25 degrees! Stay warm!

Until next time...

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## ARAnyM 0.8.5 beta Released

New versions of ARAnyM and AFROS are available for free download

http://aranym.atari.org/

## New Plugins for Escape Paint

Jens Syckor has developed two new plugins for the excellent (freeware) Escape Paint graphics program for Falcon.

The new plugins are:
- A Greyscale filter
- A PNG loading module

http://spion.atari.org

## UDO v6.4.0 Released

The new UDO release v6.4.0 covers many bug fixes and an improved memory management.

URL: http://www.udo-open-source.org

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## PEOPLE ARE TALKING

compiled by Joe Mirando
joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. As Dana mentioned last week, it’s darned cold here in the northeast. It’s the coldest it’s been in the past 20 years, and to tell you the truth, I don’t like it. <grin>

It’s not just the temperature, it’s also the strong wind coming down from the north. With the wind chill figured in, it’s going to feel like more than 30 degrees below zero.

The house we live in is old... about 160 years old... and there are all kinds of little creaks and groans all the time. I don’t mind that. It’s part of its charm. What I DO mind is the drafts.

I’m one of those cold-weather people. I prefer the cold weather to heat, so it’s not that I can’t take a little chill. It’s that I hate the idea that a lot of the heat that the furnace is generating is leaking to the outside. We don’t own the house, we rent it, so it’s not like I’m going to renovate.

But you know, it’s really a good place to be. And they’re finding that homes that are sealed up tight aren’t really all that good either... they allow all kinds of stuff to linger in the house instead of getting "blown" out through the cracks. All that "dust and allergen" stuff just hangs around and waits for you to breathe it in.

So I guess there really are at least two ways to look at everything.

Like the new American ’space initiative’. Sure, I’m a space buff. Always was, always will be. But I worry that it’s a bit too ambitious. Sometimes when you bite off more than you can chew, you lose your taste for it all together. I’d hate to see that happen. I mean, heck, we’ve already been standing still for too long in my opinion. Sure, we’ve made strides in remote rovers and orbiting telescopes, but that’s exploration by proxy.

And, yes, the pictures and data we’re getting back from the first rover (http://www.jpl.nasa.gov/mer2004/index.html) is really, really cool, but

we’ve done this before with Pathfinder. And while Columbus made several trips to the new world, it’s the first voyage that we always remember, isn’t it?

I’m not saying that we shouldn’t be going to Mars with robotic probes. There are still lots of things that we need to learn about that world before one of us sets foot upon its soil. But I’m not really talking about research, I’m talking about a vision. Let’s face it, "Our reach should ever exceed our grasp" just doesn’t keep the money flowing when you’re talking about hundreds of billions of dollars.

I just checked, and the average temperature around ’Spirit’ right now is about 12 degrees F. It’s -4 degrees F here right now. Man, I think it’s time for a vacation to Mars. <grin>

Now let’s get to the news, hints, tips, and info from the UseNet:

## From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup

Mike Freeman asks about one of my favorite suites of applications... even if I use it on another platform:

"I heard about the "Open Office" project from a friend of mine and thought I’d check it out. It looks extremely cool! For those who don’t know, it’s a MS Office-compatible office suite that’s completely free and open source, designed to be ported to any platform. It has a word processor, spreadsheet, database, presentation program, and drawing program, all able to load and save MS file formats, as well as others. They’ve got just about every mainstream platform out there porting it (Windows, MacOS X, Linux, FreeBSD, etc).

I was just wondering if anyone had considered trying to port it for high-end Atari’s (like Medusa/Hades/CT60/Aranym machines). It needs a 64Mb system, so that leaves most Atari-made machines without upgrades out of the picture, but I would imagine it would help give people a good reason to start buying the newer machines and upgrades. While we do have software that can work with images, Word files, and *old* Excel files, as well as more generic equivalents to the basic WP/Spreadsheet/Database/Drawing software, we don’t have any kind of presentation software (like powerpoint) at all, and we don’t have anything with the features that Open Office has (like saving any document as PDF by pressing a button on the toolbar, or saving Flash files from drawings and presentations). If it’s possible, I think it’d be a good thing to port to our platform as well. That said, I don’t have any experience with the porting process, so I may be barking up the wrong tree here. Any comments?

The Open Office web site is: http://www.openoffice.org/ "

Martin Tarenskeen tells Mike:

"Porting Open-Office to the Atari would be a huge effort.
In the Atari SpareMiNT project you will find many applications coming from the Open-Source/Linux world, that have been ported to run with the Atari FreeMiNT OS. Most of them are text based tools, but there are also a number of apps using X. On my Atari Falcon/CT2b these graphical apps are horribly slow. On a fast Linux based computer running Aranym things will

be more interesting. But in that case the question is: why should I waste so much hard disk space to have Open Office running in my Aranym environment, if I already have Open Office installed on the same hard disk running directly under Linux ?

For the authentic "Atari feel" I'd rather use Papyrus Office or Tempus Word in that situation, and switch to Linux to run Open Office.

But maybe some day in the (not so far) future someone will port Open Office for FreeMiNT. You could have a fast Intel/AMD based computer with a minimal Linux installation completely dedicated to Aranym. Maybe even boot (almost) directly into Aranym. And then have all those wonderful Open Source apps like Open Office and Gimp running on a virtual super Atari for a very small price. ( Someone is actually working on porting the GIMP to FreeMiNT. It's not so easy, but will eventually happen.)"

Greg Goodwin adds:

"The CT60 might be powerful enough (barely), but you are talking about a lot of compiling.  If the OSX team's problems are any indication, it's not a trivial job.

I'd be thrilled if anyone succeeded though!"

'Jedidiah' takes it in a slightly different direction:

"Why not just port GNOME or KDE? That should yield quite a number of useful applications. There are a number of office style applications (abiword/gnumeric) developed for them.

Separated from X, those interfaces might even be able to run well on older machines."

Mark Duckworth tells Jed:

"We're working on that.  First step is getting GTK-2.2.4 (or any 2.x series version) running under MiNT and it's proving quite a challenge.  Nobody mentioned it because we do not as of yet know it's possible.  Gtk 1.x was a great success but 2.x offers much better abstraction to allow something like making it gem/vdi native.  It should be interesting nonetheless."

'Tim' posts this about changing the look of his desktop:

"I am a TT030/Falcon030 user and would like to spruce up my TOS!  I ran across a site that had this screenshot up:

http://www.gregory.atari.pl/grafika/pap.gif

What OS and or tools are used to have this GUI? Looks cool.  Not overly done and I think it would be nice to do."

Adam Klobukowski tells Tim:

"It is Magic 6.x and Steward, and the program running is Papyrus."

Gerhard Stoll adds:

"The tool is Stewart <http://www.the-mclouds.de/>"

Ryan Underwood asks about his 'new' STE:

"I just unboxed a 1040 STE of unknown origin. It came with a generic "multisync switchbox" and some diskettes. Well, I haven't a RGB monitor handy nor a VGA that will work at the ST medium res, so I wired up a composite cable to the lead of pin#2 and gnd inside the switchbox. (It's my only 13pin cable...) I also floated the mono detect pin (4). Booting up the ST, I see a green power light, an all white screen, and what appears to be floppy access, but nothing else happens. What should I be seeing here? (this is my first ST)

For what it's worth, I also grounded the mono detect, and then when it boots up, on the TV it goes from a white screen to a blank screen with rolling lines (I guess that is the composite sync signal that is also on pin 2). Then I can kind of see the hi-res on my VGA monitor which I plugged into the multisync adapter, but it is also all white and nothing else happens.

>From what I read, it looks like after failing to boot from floppy I should be seeing TOS. Is that true? If so, what should I look at first to try to determine what the problem is that is preventing the machine from getting to the desktop?"

Mark Duckworth tells Ryan:

"What you are seeing is precisely what you should be seeing. For some reason unbeknown to me the ST's take around 40 seconds to show a desktop. The floppy will light. To get around this, simply stick any sort of normally formatted 720K floppy in the drive and it will go directly to the desktop.

FYI, the TV cannot show mono. Hence you don't want to do anything with the mono detect. You see those lines when you ground that pin because your TV can't do ST-mono - and I would think it could possibly damage your TV. Using a TV you are limited to ST-Medium and ST-Low resolutions which to be honest on an ST are the most interesting ones (ST-low, games).

It takes a while. Like 40 seconds. Just let it sit there for what might seem like an eternity. You'll get a desktop with floppy A and B icons. I can't imagine any good reason you wouldn't."

Ryan tells Mark:

"Now with knowing how the thing is supposed to function, I took the "multisync switchbox" which had an audio output, a VGA 15-pin output (for hi-res) and a RGB 9-pin output (I guess for low-res on a 1084S or similar). I added a composite output, an audio input, and ran a new ground wire from the ST 13-pin connector to the VGA plug since the signal ground had been broken somehow inside the cable. Now I get a 320x200 green desktop on a composite monitor when switch is in one position, and when switch is

flipped to the other position, it reboots and puts a 640x400 mono desktop on my VGA monitor.

Looks like we are doing pretty good except for a few things:
1) The quality of the VGA is decently sharp now that the ground is fixed, but it is "flickery". Is this normal? The composite video is stable but slightly fuzzy like all composite video; there is no flicker to it at all.

2) When I switch from VGA to composite and back: whichever monitor is _not_ currently being displayed upon, instead of receiving nothing at all on its input, receives a messed up signal and goes out of sync. Is this the fault of the switchbox I have, or normal behavior?

3) I ran a cracktro from a diskette I got with the system. After 2-3 minutes of letting the graphics/music demo run, the ST stops with two bomb icons right next to each other in the middle of the screen, and the music halts to a solid tone. I guess this is the system crashing. (?) What are usual causes of this? There is no add-ons in the ST that I can see that would be stressing it. It definitely has not been used for awhile. Does the 4-inch dropfix address random bombs?

I did the 4 inch drop and it didn't change a thing, so I opened up the STe and found an open cap and a few with ESR through the roof. I think my problem is located there....

I booted it up this morning, this time bit my tongue while waiting, and there's the desktop!"

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in again next week, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - "URU: Ages Beyond Myst"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Warner Bros. Returns to Games!
Curbing Violent Computer Games?!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

New Myst Game Confounding, Beautiful

It’s been a decade since the digital artisans at Cyan Worlds debuted "Myst," a gorgeous video game which encouraged thoughtful exploration over mindless violence.

Now we have "URU: Ages Beyond Myst." Although the most promising feature - Internet play - isn’t fully available, "URU" still sets a new standard in peaceful armchair archaeology.

It’s certainly a change from the violence-filled norm: there are no bazookas for blasting giant multi-headed aliens, no blood-splattered corpses littering the landscape.

Instead, you begin wandering under the brilliant sun in the New Mexico desert. Soon you stumble upon a crack in the ground, which serves as a gateway to more mysterious locations.

As the story goes, it’s been 250 years since the ancient D’ni civilization vanished from the depths of the earth. During their prime, the D’ni invented a craft which allowed them to write "Linking Books" - magical texts which let readers travel to various locations, called "Ages."

The D’ni Restoration Council, a group of present-day explorers, has begun restoring the long-forgotten D’ni ages.

Your role? Uncover the many mysteries within in each age and learn something about the D’ni in the process.

It’s best to think of each age as a collection of puzzle pieces. You "win" the game by touching all seven "journeys" - posters with a hand symbol drawn on them - hidden in each age.

Reaching all the journeys often involves repairing or powering up various machinery.

My only real complaint is that the puzzles can be painstakingly difficult.

In the Kadish Tolesa age, for example, I spent hours roaming around before I figured that in order to open a door, I needed to match up a series of rotating images with a panel of buttons that was located in a completely different part of the age.

Your best bet is to scrutinize every button, lever and cave painting.

And for sanity’s sake, keep a notebook and pencil handy. I found myself constantly jotting down notes and scribbling maps. Many times, the information helped solve a puzzle later on.

"URU" plays out in three dimensions, and that means goodbye to the flat slideshow look of the original "Myst" and sequels "Riven" and "Exile."

The extra dimension provided moments straight out of a "Mario Brothers" game - sometimes you’ll have to jump over precipices, piles of rubble and other obstacles.

"URU" can be maddeningly difficult but also soothes with rich artistic spectacle.

Stellar, photorealistic graphics stopped me in my tracks. Everything has an aged, careworn look, and there were small details, too: some metal

objects had a shiny chrome appearance, veined with just the right amount of rust and wear.

From the murmur of a gentle breeze rustling through a stand of trees to the gurgling of a waterfall, ambient sounds and new age music complete the immersive effect.

What promises to be he game’s biggest innovation is a multiplayer mode where you can uncover additional ages and an unfolding story with other people online.

Unfortunately, it’s currently available by invitation only. Upon completion of this review, Cyan Worlds had not sent me the e-mail invitation I need to enter the subscription-based service.

Cyan Worlds took a risk releasing a game which rewards perception and patience. We all should be thankful.

I suggest anyone who needs a break from reality pick up this $50 game and heed the advice of the game makers: "Close the door, turn down the lights, turn up the volume, and experience URU as if you were actually there. ... And remember the journey is the reward."

Three stars out of four.

## Warner Bros. Sets Up Video Game Division

Movie studio Warner Bros., moving to embrace the fast-growing video game industry which increasingly competes with Hollywood for entertainment dollars, on Wednesday said it was setting up its own games division.

Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment will continue the studio’s work building deals with developers and licensing content, and will also house a division called Warner Bros. Games that will develop and distribute titles under its own brand name. Warner Bros. is a unit of Time Warner Inc.

The new division, reporting to both senior entertainment and consumer products executives, will be headed by Jason Hall, formerly co-founder and chief executive of game developer Monolith Productions, which did work on the "Matrix" video games for Warner Bros.

Hall, who will hold the title of senior vice president, Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment, told Reuters his job will be to keep Warner Bros. from struggling in the game business as other studios have done.

"I sat in the game industry on the other side of the table for a very long time watching film studios try and try," he said. "Here comes the opportunity for me to take Warner Bros. into the game industry and make them significantly relevant to the game industry and the future of the game industry."

Movie studios have had something of a mixed record with games divisions in past years, entering and exiting the business repeatedly.

DreamWorks had its own game unit, which it ended up selling to industry leader Electronic Arts Inc. Last year, Fox Entertainment Group’s movie unit sold its games business to Vivendi Universal Games, itself a licensee from

Universal Studios, both units of French media group Vivendi Universal.

Warner Bros. has been affiliated with games companies numerous times in past, from the period when the then-Warner Communications owned Atari to Time Warner’s 1990s-era interest in game developer Inscape.

"The first thing I need to do is to get the message out to the consumer, to the game industry, to the other industries that are paying attention to this, that Warner Bros. should not be viewed any longer as not taking the game industry very seriously," Hall said.

Warner Bros.-licensed games have been very successful in the recent past, particularly "Harry Potter" games at Electronic Arts and "Enter the Matrix" at Atari Inc.. The studio has generally been more aggressive than most with licensing and promotion.

One problem, though, is a perception among players that games based on movies are often of low quality because they are rushed to market and underfunded.

"I’ll be damned if that’s going to happen under my watch," Hall said.

He said he intends to tap Warner Bros. library for material in addition to working with its new properties. Some development will be internal, he said, while some properties will be licensed and some will be co-published.

"It is obvious to practically everyone that the video game business is very relevant to profitability, the extension of film franchises, the consumer perception of how powerful your content is," Hall said.

## Florida City Aims to Curb Violent Computer Games

A Florida city is determined to pass a law restricting children’s access to violent computer games despite legal challenges to similar attempts elsewhere, and charges of censorship, its mayor said on Friday.

The ordinance proposed by North Miami City Council was prompted by fury in Miami’s large Haitian American community at Rockstar Game’s top-selling "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City," in which players are urged to "kill the Haitians."

Rockstar owners Take-Two Interactive Software Inc have agreed to cut the offending remarks from future issues.

"This is not about censorship, it’s about inciting violence," said Mayor Joe Celestin, a Haitian American. "We’re going to take it all the way."

"If you say ’kill the bad guy,’ I have no problem," Celestin told Reuters.

"But when you target a race of people and say kill all the Haitians because they are drug dealers, gangsters and voodoo worshipers, and you get $2,000 for killing the Haitians, that is the kind of thing that, if you want your children to play that video, I think parental consent is required."

The proposal, which won preliminary approval from the council this week but still has to go through a second vote, would impose a $250 fine on retailers who sell or rent to a minor, without parental approval, a game in

which players kill or cause harm "to a human form."

The ordinance sparked criticism from the American Civil Liberties Union, which says it could cover everything but "Tom and Jerry, maybe," and interfered with the parent-child relationship, and from retailers.

"Have they ever watched Cartoon Network?" North Miami video store owner Bob Richardson told the Miami Herald newspaper. "It's the most violent network on television."

North Miami's bid to restrict the distribution of violent games is not a first in the United States. But all such attempts have proven unsuccessful to date.

U.S. Rep. Joe Baca, a California Democrat, has repeatedly tried to get backing for a bill in the U.S. House of Representatives to make it a federal misdemeanor to sell violent games to minors.

A similar St. Louis County, Missouri, law was struck down by a federal appeals court, which ruled that games were a protected form of free speech, and a judge blocked a Washington state law that would have restricted sales of games depicting violence against law enforcement officers.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

## Inbox Trauma: New Anti-Spam Tools Falter

Software makers have spent millions of dollars developing new tools for battling spam, and a new federal anti-spam law went into effect on Jan. 1. So are our e-mail inboxes any less cluttered?

In the week since the law took effect, spam-filtering company Brightmail Inc. flagged 58 percent of incoming e-mail as spam, showing no change from December. And America Online Inc. saw a 10 percent jump in spam from overseas, possibly from spammers trying to evade U.S. law.

Some experts even believe the new law will actually bury us in even more electronic junk.

"Now we have a green light for what would come to be called 'legal spam,'" said Vincent Schiavone, chief executive of the ePrivacy Group consultancy. By establishing official guidelines for what's permissible, "the federal law made unsolicited mail legal but no less unwanted."

Advances in filtering technology aren't eliminating spam, either, as spammers quickly develop smarter countermeasures such as constantly changing the wording in their messages.

As well, spammers have used computer viruses to create additional e-mail

relay points even as Internet service companies shut down previously poisoned pathways.

Leslie Flynn, an administrative assistant for an investment banker, continues to get ads for Xanex, Valium and "things to make parts of your bodies bigger."

The new law doesn't actually ban pitches as long as senders meet various guidelines - such as including an accurate subject line and the sender's real-world mail address. Recipients must also be offered a way to decline, or opt out of, future e-mailings.

The law's backers figure spammers aren't inclined to be so cooperative or forthright, but neither will they want to face up to five years imprisonment.

"A spammer will see that and say, 'Yikes, I'm going to move to another line of business," said Trevor Hughes of the Email Service Provider Coalition, whose members send newsletters and other bulk mailings they deem legitimate.

But notably, many marketers support the law, particularly its nullification of some conflicting state statutes and, in California's case, tougher measures that would have required a recipient's permission before sending commercial e-mail.

"Everyone was planning for this California law, which was so draconian," said Ira Rothken, a San Rafael, Calif., lawyer who has defended companies accused of spamming. "Once the federal government passed the federal law, everyone was kind of relieved."

He said many marketers who had, because of the California law, planned on scaling back on e-mailings sent on their behalf by freelancers were no longer curtailing the mailing.

"Basically it's a bill of rights for companies that want to send junk e-mail," said John Levine, a board member of the Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial E-Mail.

Several marketers insist they'll adhere to stronger guidelines and only ship missives to people who have requested mailings.

"From a marketer's perspective, you have to think of the long term," said Michael Sippey of Quris Inc., which handles e-mail for Charles Schwab Corp., Blockbuster Inc. and others. He said marketers won't want to forever lose potential customers who get annoyed and opt out.

Nonetheless, Sippey agreed that the law won't stop spammers from simply moving offshore or further trying to hide their tracks - even if doing so is now illegal.

Some critics of the law point to technology as the solution, though techniques developed so far have failed.

Jonathan Spira, whose Basex Inc. analysis firm declared spam the "Product of the Year" for 2003, said spammers have an edge because they merely have to outsmart machines. By contrast, those building the machines have to not only outsmart spammers, they also must avoid blocking legitimate mail.

"We don't have the solution yet. We have the big Band-Aids," said Spira.

Levine heads a new working group to explore fundamental changes in the e-mail architecture and plans to begin tests as soon as February.

Researchers at Microsoft Corp. and elsewhere are studying whether to require small payments to send e-mail, costs that would be prohibitive for spammers who send millions of messages.

IronPort Systems Inc., Yahoo Inc. and the Email Service Provider Coalition have explored ways to authenticate trusted senders so that newsletters and other legitimate mailings get through, allowing more aggressive filtering to spurn the unwanted.

Cloudmark Inc., meanwhile, has created a network of individuals who collectively identify spam and legitimate mailings, improving filtering accuracy, while Privacy Inc. will soon offer a variation on disposable e-mail addresses - aliases you can control to, say, restrict Amazon.com mailings to one a month.

But ultimately, the solution may involve neither law nor technology.

Mary Youngblood, abuse team manager at EarthLink Inc., said people need to be more savvy in using e-mail.

Among her tips: Put numbers in the middle of e-mail addresses to make them harder to guess, and use a separate address for online shopping and newsgroup postings.

## Judge Orders End of Spam by Indian Firm

In a landmark judgment, a court on Tuesday ordered an Indian company to stop jamming an Internet service by sending junk e-mails, or spam, a news report said.

Judge R.C. Chopra ordered McCoy Infosystems Private Ltd. to stop transmission of unsolicited bulk electronic mail to any user of the state-owned Internet services provider, VSN Limited, the Press Trust of India news agency said.

The court in New Delhi was ruling on a lawsuit filed by a major Indian telecommunications firm, Tata Sons Ltd. and its subsidiary, Panatone Finwest Ltd., which own a large stake in VSNL.

Tata Sons alleged in the lawsuit that McCoy Infosystems was intentionally "trespassing" on VSNL’s property by sending vast amounts of spam to its service users.

"This is the first court order in the country on spamming," PTI quoted Pravin Anand, Tata Sons’ attorney, as saying after the verdict.

Since existing laws don’t address recent technological advances such as spam, the company had turned to older laws referring to trespass of goods and nuisance laws to counter the menace of junk e-mails, Anand said.

Tata Sons’ attorneys told the court that the McCoy Infosystems’ "continued action had severely degraded VSNL’s capacity to function effectively," PTI said.

The junk e-mails had led to slower server speeds and longer response times, Anand said.

By sending unsolicited bulk e-mails, McCoy Infosystems was breaching the privacy of VSNL and their subscribers, Anand was quoted as saying.

## Spam Now Accounts for Nearly Two-thirds of All Emails

Spam accounted for nearly two-thirds of all email traffic in December, a record high, US-British filter firm MessageLabs warned.

"The figures are that 62.7 percent of the mail we filtered globally last month was spam," the company's chief technical officer, Mark Sunner, said Wednesday in an interview with AFP from Britain.

"These growth rates are very, very dramatic."

In November, spam accounted for 55 percent of all monitored emails, and in October it was 51 percent, he said.

Filter companies are hired by corporations to do the chore of weeding out potential spam before emails reach their inbox.

MessageLabs filters 30 million emails a day for 7,500 corporate clients, Sunner said.

He added that a "slightly higher" percentage of spam had been expected ahead of Christmas as spammers pitched festive deals, but the actual figure turned out to be much greater than expected.

In January 2003, spam accounted for only 10 percent of all emails. By April 2004, according to Sunner, the figure will be "around 70 percent."

He attributed the increase partly to the ineffectiveness of new anti-spam laws in the United States, the biggest geographical source of unsollicited emails, but also to "viral techniques" in which spammers hijacked computers to boost distribution and remain anonymous.

Spam is not just widely considered to be irritating or offensive.

It also carries a spiralling economic cost, because firms have to boost computer processing power and storage to cope with the rising tide and employees have to spend time deleting unwanted mail.

## PayPal Scam Spreads Mimail Worm

After releasing a new version of the Mimail e-mail worm last week, virus authors are using a new tool to help it spread: spam e-mail containing a Trojan horse program that, once installed, retrieves and installs the worm.

The new threat, which targets customers of EBay's PayPal online payment service, highlights a growing trend in which online criminals combine

computer viruses, spam distribution techniques, Trojan horse programs, and "phishing" scams to circumvent security technology and fool Internet users, says Carole Theriault, security consultant at Sophos in Abingdon, England.

Antivirus companies including Sophos and Kaspersky Labs warned customers Thursday about the new threat, which arrives in e-mail in-boxes as a message purporting to come from online payment service PayPal.

The message subject line is "PAYPAL.COM NEW YEAR OFFER" and it reads, in part: "for a limited time only PayPal is offering to add 10 percent of the total balance in your PayPal account to your account and all you have to do is register yourself within the next five business days with our application (see attachment)!"

For their computers to be infected, users who open the compressed Zip file attached to the e-mail must then open a second file, which installs a Trojan horse program. That program connects to a Web site in Russia and retrieves the latest version of the Mimail worm, Mimail-N, Theriault says.

Once installed, Mimail-N alters the configuration of Microsoft Windows so that the worm is launched whenever Windows starts, harvests e-mail addresses from the computer’s hard drive, and mails copies of itself out to those addresses. It also creates phony PayPal Web pages used to prompt the user to enter credit card numbers and other personal information, according to an alert issued by Kaspersky Labs.

Information that is harvested is sent to the same Russian Internet site from which the Mimail worm was retrieved, Theriault says.

The strategy of using a Trojan program to retrieve the new virus is unorthodox, and may be intended to circumvent antivirus products that have already been updated to spot the new versions of Mimail, she says.

Trojan horse programs cannot spread on their own, like e-mail or Internet worms, but they do provide a new way to infiltrate a computer on a network that is using antivirus protection at the e-mail gateway. If the antivirus product has not been updated to detect the new Trojan program, e-mail messages containing it can slip by those defenses and be opened by users, she says.

The biggest impact of the new worm will be on home Internet users who have not installed desktop antivirus or firewall products, she says.

Even if users end up falling for the ruse, organizations that use firewalls and desktop antivirus products should be able to spot the Trojan program once it is installed on the desktop or prevent it from connecting to the outside server and retrieving a copy of the Mimail worm, she says.

## Intel, IBM Backing New Fund to Defend Linux Users

Two of the largest backers of Linux, the fast-growing operating system popular with businesses, are contributing to a new fund that will defend Linux users against copyright infringement lawsuits threatened by SCO Group Inc.

An industry group formed to promote Linux - an operating system that provides an alternative to Unix and to Microsoft’s dominant Windows

software - said on Monday it has formed a "Linux legal defense fund" and that the No. 1 computer company and No.1 semiconductor company have agreed to help fund it.

International Business Machines Corp., which has adopted Linux as a competitive tool to sell more hardware and services, and Intel Corp., which makes the chips that Linux runs on, are contributing to the fund, although they haven’t specified how much.

Open Source Development Labs, or OSDL, a nonprofit industry consortium based in Beaverton, Oregon, that is working to promote further adoption of Linux, said in a statement on Monday that it created the fund, which so far has attracted pledges of $3 million. OSDL said it is aiming for $10 million.

Linux, a variant of the widely used Unix operating system which can be copied and modified freely, emerged a decade ago and is being used to run the Internet, handle financial transactions and even manage the U.S. nuclear arsenal.

"The threats from SCO were becoming louder and more frequent that they are going to sue an end user," Stuart Cohen, chief executive of OSDL, told Reuters. "We don’t want the Linux community to have this cloud over their head ... or to see the momentum or deployment of Linux slowed down."

Concerns over the legality of Linux were raised last year after SCO, which came to own the rights to Unix, sued IBM for billions of dollars. SCO also warned companies that they must pay to use Linux or face litigation.

IBM, which won’t be tapping into the defense fund for its own legal battles, was accused by SCO of embedding parts of SCO’s Unix software code in versions of the freely available Linux operating system.

IBM, which has an OSDL board seat, refuted the claims and counter-sued SCO, saying that SCO had infringed on its patents and breached the general public license for Linux.

"By refusing to give the basis of their claims, what they’re doing is preventing the Linux community from resolving any potential intellectual property issues," Intel spokesman Chuck Mulloy said.

Intel, also an OSDL member with a board seat, has also been one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Linux, since the software is designed to run primarily on its chips. Intel became the world’s largest semiconductor company by selling chips for personal computers running Microsoft Corp.’s software, and the Linux operating system is proving to be a formidable competitor to Microsoft.

"If they (OSDL) feel strong in their legal defense then they should set up to indemnify end-users," SCO chief executive Darl McBride told Reuters.

McBride said SCO would make good on its threat to sue a "large Linux end user" within a month, adding "I think it’s time to face this thing head on."

Other Linux advocates, including Hewlett-Packard Co. and Red Hat Inc., have also taken similar measures to protect themselves and their customers against lawsuits.

## Judge Upholds $521 Million Verdict Against Microsoft

A federal judge upheld a $521 million verdict against Microsoft Corp. this week, saying jurors were correct in determining that the world's largest software maker infringed on patents held by others for its Internet Explorer browser, according to court documents.

Microsoft, which had been arguing for a new trial, said it would immediately appeal the verdict.

Judge James Zagel of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois denied Microsoft's request for a new trial in its patent case with the University of California and Eolas Technologies Inc., which jointly hold a key Web browsing technology patent.

"This motion rehearses a series of arguments that failed the first time around," Zagel said, who said he made decision despite being uncomfortable with the amount of the initial verdict.

The suit, originally brought against the world's largest software maker in 1999 by Eolas Technologies, which was founded by University of California professor Michael Doyle, charged that Microsoft had used Eolas' patented Web browser technology which allows other mini-applications to work with Microsoft's Internet Explorer browser.

"We're pleased that the judgment has been entered," said Martin Lueck, who heads the business litigation group at Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi LLP that represented Eolas.

"We believe on the merits that we're correct, and certainly so far that's proved to be true," Lueck said, adding that he expected the appeal process to last a year.

Judge Zagel also barred Microsoft from distributing versions of Internet Explorer containing the disputed technologies, but put that injunction on hold until Microsoft's appeal is over.

"Today's ruling simply finalizes a verdict already reached last summer," Microsoft spokeswoman Stacy Drake said from a prepared statement, adding that Microsoft will appeal.

"We feel good about our prospects on appeal, remain steadfast in our belief that the Eolas patent is not valid...," Drake said.

Microsoft believes that the Eolas patent will eventually be invalidated, either through further trials or by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, which is reviewing U.S. Patent No. 5,838,906, granted in 1998.

Judge Zagel also ordered Microsoft to prepay $45.3 million while Microsoft's appeal runs its course.

## Yahoo Emerges From Dot-Com Gloom

They're cheering again at Yahoo! Inc. The dot-com bellwether has recovered $21 billion in shareholder wealth by astutely anticipating the habits of

Web surfers - so much so, in fact, that it now outranks MSN and America Online as the Internet’s top destination.

After a mortifying two-year slump, the Sunnyvale, Calif.-based company made a $238 million profit in 2003, impressing disillusioned investors who had written off Yahoo as another dot-com has-been.

Rave reviews are pouring in for chief executive Terry Semel, the former head of Warner Bros. who came to the rescue in May 2001.

"It’s been a very exciting trip because the results have been so great," said Semel, who still spends weekends at his southern California home.

Yahoo’s comeback represents another hopeful sign for the high-tech industry. As more people get high-speed Internet connections in their homes and invest in portable devices to stay online, tech leaders like Intel Corp. and Apple Computer Inc. also are reporting higher profits.

After deteriorating from a 2000 high of $237.50 to a 2001 low of $8.02, Yahoo’s stock price has tripled since the end of 2002, reaching $48 in mid-January. Semel himself realized a $25.7 million windfall by exercising 1 million Yahoo stock options last year.

The company’s Web sites emerged as the most popular Internet destinations the last two months, surpassing Microsoft Corp.’s MSN and Time Warner Inc.’s AOL for the first time, according to comScore Networks, which tracks Web use. Yahoo had 111 million unique visitors in December.

Yahoo has thrived while Microsoft has directed much of its attention at luring traffic from AOL, said industry analyst Rob Enderle. But that could quickly change if MSN, AOL or another major Web site targets Yahoo.

While MSN and AOL can count on built-in traffic from the subscribers who also pay them for Internet connections, Yahoo has relatively few financial ties to its audience.

"If someone really takes aim and decides to try to hit Yahoo, they could lose a lot of people before they even knew it was happening," Enderle said.

The threat doesn’t appear to worry Wall Street.

Analysts expect Yahoo’s profits to rise nearly 50 percent this year - a target the company can’t afford to miss, with its stock carrying a lofty price-to-earnings ratio of 89. That multiple is minuscule, though, compared to the company’s p/e ratio of nearly 2,000 before the bubble burst in late 2000.

There is one striking similarity to those frothy days: Almost everyone seems convinced Yahoo is poised for years of robust growth as the Internet increasingly becomes ingrained in people’s lives and more homes get broadband connections to make the medium even more useful.

Yahoo "is a company in the right place at the right time," said analyst Imran Khan of Fulcrum Global Partners.

Much of Yahoo’s success reflects a turnaround in Internet advertising, which fell from a $7.6 billion market in 2000 to $6.2 billion in 2002 and rebounded to $6.8 billion last year, according to figures gathered by Fulcrum. It expects online advertising to soar as high as $8.1 billion

this year.

Yahoo’s ad revenue has grown substantially since it paid $1.8 billion to acquire Overture Services, a marketing vehicle that charges Web sites to display their links alongside related search engine results.

Other acquisitions in Semel’s $2.5 billion buying spree included the online help-wanted site HotJobs and search engine provider Inktomi.

With a soft-spoken manner and no previous Internet experience, the 60-year-old Semel didn’t seem like a logical choice to run Yahoo, a fun-loving company filled with brash, tech-savvy workers who weren’t even born when he first became a Hollywood executive in 1972.

When Semel was brought into replace Tim Koogle, who had led the company almost since its inception, it was such an uncomfortable fit that many analysts thought Yahoo hired Semel simply to tap into his Hollywood connections so the company could be sold to a media giant.

But Semel surprised the skeptics, including many of Yahoo’s own employees who wondered what the new CEO had in mind as he quietly studied the company for months after his arrival. As Semel ruminated, Yahoo was on its way to a $92.8 million loss that led to 800 layoffs, half of them on Semel’s watch.

Once he grasped Yahoo’s strengths and weaknesses, Semel oversaw a methodical makeover that has imposed more discipline on the company, replacing the New Economy’s iconoclasm with old-school capitalism.

In its early years, Yahoo’s spontaneous approach produced a haphazard mix of popular innovations and experimental features that never made money.

Today, Yahoo carefully measures just about everything it does in terms of revenue per user and revenue per employee.

The focus has paid off - Yahoo generates $375,000 in revenue per employee, up from $221,000 at the end of 2001 when Yahoo’s payroll had shrunk to 3,000 workers. Yahoo now has 5,500 employees.

The company’s monthly revenue per user now stands at 67 cents, up from 35 cents at the end of 2001.

Semel also expanded Yahoo’s subscription base from 200,000 when he arrived to 4.9 million last year.

Many of the new subscribers have been picked up through a partnership with SBC Communications Inc. to sell high-speed Internet connections, positioning Yahoo to sell audio and video subscriptions. Yahoo visitors already pay fees for features such as extra e-mail storage and its popular matchmaking service.

Semel thinks Yahoo may have more than 7.5 million subscribers by year’s end, using a strategy some analysts liken to an amusement theme park that constantly finds new ways to encourage visitors to spend money once inside the gates.

By taking over Inktomi as well as the online search engine AltaVista as part of the Overture acquisition, Yahoo gained the leverage it needed to cut ties by April with its former ally turned rival Google Inc.

Yahoo’s early $10 million investment in Google is likely to be worth

hundreds of millions if, as expected, the online search leader goes public this year. Semel says he hasn't decided if Yahoo will sell the stock to help finance its own future expansion.

"I haven't given much thought to Google's IPO," he said. "We've been too busy taking advantage of all our opportunities around here."

## Microsoft Extends Windows 98 Support

Just days before it was to end support for Windows 98 and Windows 98 Second Edition, Microsoft has decided to extend the life of the products until June 30, 2006.

The Redmond, Washington-based software vendor also extended support for Windows Millennium Edition, which was set to end December 31, 2004, until June 30, 2006, it says in a statement Monday.

Microsoft was planning to end support for Windows 98 and Windows 98 Second Edition on January 16. This means that telephone support would no longer be available and Microsoft would stop releasing security updates for the operating system products. Microsoft told users to upgrade to a newer operating system if they still wanted support.

Microsoft has now reversed its decision in response to customers' needs and to bring Windows 98 SE in line with its updated product lifecycle policy, the company says. Microsoft has changed its product lifecycle policy to provide support for seven years instead of the original four, it says.

Despite the availability of Windows XP since late 2001, Windows 98 and Windows 98 SE, which came to market in June 1998 and June 1999, respectively, are still widely used.

Research firm IDC estimates that over 58 million copies of Windows 98 were installed worldwide at the end of 2003, says Dan Kusnetzky, vice president of systems software research at IDC.

AssetMetrix, an Ottawa-based IT asset analysis tool vendor, late last year collected data on over 370,000 PCs from 670 businesses in the U.S. and Canada. It found that 80 percent of those companies have at least one PC running either Windows 95 or Windows 98. The older operating systems accounted for about 27 percent of operating systems found.

## German Police Investigate Potato Computer Scam

German police are investigating after an angry man returned a computer he had just bought saying it was packed with small potatoes instead of computer parts.

The store replaced the computer free of charge but became suspicious when he returned a short time later with another potato-filled computer casing, police in the western city of Kaiserslautern said on Monday.

"The second time he said he didn't need a computer any more and asked for his money back in cash," a police spokesman said.

Police are now investigating the man for fraud.

## Innocent Web Sites Shut Down

The Web site for the Sheshequin-Ulster Community Center in Pennsylvania contains skating party news, calls for volunteers and minutes of board meetings-but no pornography. Nonetheless, the site was one of scores of sites that had the misfortune of sharing IP addresses with child pornography sites targeted by the state of Pennsylvania and was shut down last summer.

The center’s ISP is among more than a dozen ISPs in Pennsylvania that have been issued informal notices from the Office of the Attorney General to block Web sites. The censorship stems from a state statute in 2000 that was enacted to combat child pornography but, according to civil rights advocates, inadvertently suppresses protected speech by blocking hundreds of thousands of innocent sites.

Last week, the Center for Democracy and Technology and the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania argued before the U.S. District Court of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania that the law violates the First and 14th Amendments as well as the Interstate Commerce Clause.

The Webmaster at the Sheshequin-Ulster Community Center, Laura Blain, did not know that her site was blocked until a county supervisor complained about not being able to locate information, Blain said.

When Blain called her ISP, she was told her site was "caught up in something they couldn’t divulge," Blain said.

Lack of notice to the site owner is at the center of the complaint brought by the CDT and ACLU. The organizations argue that content owners’ due process is violated by a process that involves the ISPs alone. Additionally, since the law went into effect, the attorney general has issued more than 450 informal notices to ISPs, resulting in blocked Web sites, and one formal court order. The attorney general’s office maintains that ISPs sought the informal process.

"When this law was passed, we sat down with a number of ISPs to discuss ways to implement it, and the ISPs asked our office to create this informal notification process rather than go to court," said Sean Connolly, spokesman for the acting attorney general.

Pennsylvania concedes that blocking IP addresses can cause "collateral restriction" of some protected speech, but it argues that ISPs can use different means-such as URL filtering-to prevent overblocking.

## Berners-Lee Is Knighted

The Queen of England this month named Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the World Wide Web, a Knight Commander, Order of the British Empire, in honor of his contributions to the development of the Internet.

The British computer scientist and Oxford graduate holds the 3Com Founders chair at the Laboratory for Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence at MIT, and he is director of the World Wide Web Consortium.

Berners-Lee invented the initial specifications for URLs, HTTP and HTML while working at CERN, the European Particle Physics Laboratory. He wrote the first Web browser and server software in 1990.

## Internet ’Geek’ Image Shattered by New Study

The typical Internet user - far from being a geek - shuns television and actively socializes with friends, a study on surfing habits said Wednesday.

The findings of the first World Internet Project report present an image of the average Netizen that contrasts with the stereotype of the loner "geek" who spends hours of his free time on the Internet and rarely engages with the real world.

Instead, the typical Internet user is an avid reader of books and spends more time engaged in social activities than the non-user, it says. And, television viewing is down among some Internet users by as much as five hours per week compared with Net abstainers, the study added.

"Use of the Internet is reducing television viewing around the world while having little impact on positive aspects of social life," said Jeffrey Cole, director of the UCLA Center for Communication Policy, the California university that organized the project.

"Most Internet users generally trust the information they find online," he told Reuters via e-mail.

The findings are derived from surveys of Internet and non-Internet users in 14 countries: the United States, Britain, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Japan, Macao, South Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, China and Chile.

The study does however support some long-established Internet usage trends including the fact that the wealthiest segments of the population are the most avid users and that more men than women surf the Web. But figures vary widely by country.

For example, the gender gap is most pronounced in Italy and smallest in Taiwan. According to the study, 41.7 percent of Italian men are online compared to 21.5 percent of Italian women. In Taiwan, the difference is 25.1 percent for men and 23.5 percent for women.

The digital divide, a phrase used to describe how poverty impacts Web usage, appears to be tightening around the world, Cole said.

In seven of the 12 countries for which the information was available, more than 20 percent of the poorest segment of the population uses the Internet. Sweden, Korea and the U.S. have the highest usage of Internet users among the poor.

The credibility of information published on the Internet also received a surprising boost.

Despite the existence of countless spoof Web sites and message boards that carry oddball political rants, more than half of Internet users surveyed said "most or all" of the information they find online is reliable and credible.

The most trusting users are in South Korea while Swedes are the biggest skeptics about the veracity of Web news.

The Chinese, meanwhile, are among the most active Net socialisers. According to the study, Chinese Internet users say they rely on the medium to interact with others who share their political interests, hobbies and faith.

"It’s more than in any other country and a significant figure for citizens of a nation in which religion is officially banned," the study said of Chinese users’ willingness to discuss religion online with others.

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